

Dear Chairs Flexer and Fox, Vice Chairs Haskell and Thomas, Ranking Members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco, and Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee,

My name is Sophie Kane and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for **S.B. 184, An Act Extending Through November 8, 2022, Several Changes Regarding Election Administration as a Result of COVID-19 and Concerning Eligibility to Vote by Absentee Ballot**. This bill would make the pandemic an acceptable excuse for requesting an absentee ballot for the 2022 midterm election, following similar decisions for 2020 and 2021 elections in Connecticut. The recent spike in COVID-19 cases is still fresh in our minds, serving as a reminder that the pandemic is still very much present and constantly changing. We do not know what the state of the world will be in November; for that reason, it is critical that voters are given the autonomy to vote in whatever manner will best serve the health of both them and their families in 2022.

Absentee voting makes the voting process more accessible and would make our state more democratic. Voting is not a privilege, it's a right granted to all Americans, and it should be treated as such by our laws. A 2020 study found that implementing universal vote-by-mail (a step farther than this bill goes) does not favor one party over another in turnout within the party or in the election itself. The same study saw a 2% increase on average in overall voter turnout in states that had implemented universal vote-by-mail.

In conclusion, I urge you to support S.B. 184 and provide equal access to the ballot for all, regardless of their comfort level during the pandemic. Especially with COVID-19 having a disproportionately dangerous impact on Black, Brown, and low-income communities and individuals, there is no reason to force voters to cast their ballots in person during a time of such strong uncertainty. Senior citizens, immunocompromised voters, Black/Brown voters, low-income voters, and any voters afraid of contracting COVID-19 at the polls deserve to participate in the midterm election—and every election, for that matter—without feeling as if they must risk their lives to do so, and absentee voting will provide all Connecticut voters with that comfort. I implore you to favorably vote this bill out of the Government Administration and Elections Committee so that every voter can feel safe exercising their Constitutional right to vote this election season.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sophie Kane  
New Haven, CT